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ABSTRACT

This report highlights the safety initiatives developed at 31 public school districts across the country and designed to ensure that students have a safe and secure learning environment. Specific initiatives include violence-prevention programs, collaborative efforts among schools and communities, gang prevention and intervention efforts, peer counseling, conflict resolution, administrative and instructional initiatives, and prevention curricula. (GLR)

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December, 1993

Safety Initiatives in Urban Public Schools*

ED 366 708

Boston Public Schools

Boston Public Schools covened last March a Citywide Youth Safety Committee to develop strategies that would guarantee for all students a safe and secure learning environment. Some innovations have occurred at school sites including: conflict resolution and peer leadership curriculum, staff training that emphasizes a more positive school climate, a 3rd to 5th grade student adviser program that relies on each adult employee to act as a liaison to the family, parent orientations, workshops on how parents can help their children, and crisis intervention specialists on school sites. Other programs involve collaboration with the Boston Community Centers that ensures student support after school hours and Winner's Circle, a program that identifies at-risk students and provides academic and social support. Some recommendations to the district are: increased Student Support Services, establishment of school-based health clinics in all high schools, implementation of the "Jail Brake" program in collaboration with Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, continuation of the Behavior Management Team and the need for a school-based Crisis Response Team.

Buffalo Public Schools

Buffalo Public Schools has maintained safe and secure schools by implementing a number of security procedures and violence prevention programs. BPS has increased its school security officers, maintains strict enforcement of existing rules and regulations, banned packs and bags on K-12 school grounds, established gun-free and drug-free zones, provides 126-hour training program for all security personnel and enforces random locker searches. The district has also implemented a district-wide radio system and has developed a working relationship with the Metro Police Patrol to ensure safety on the bus and subway systems. Additionally, the district has established the "AIM (Attendance Is Mandatory) Team Patrol" and the system wide "drug/weapons tip line" that accepts and investigates complaints which are then sent to the Buffalo Police Department.

Cleveland Public Schools

Cleveland City School District has made violence prevention a priority through its health initiatives, programs, teacher training and community involvement. Cleveland's award winning Safety and Security unit initiated the Youth Gang Unit which is a gang prevention and intervention program. The district developed: youth mediation and peer counseling programs for teachers and teams of students; health education violence prevention curriculum; the STAR (Straight Talk About Risks) k-12 program; and the Watch Your Hands curriculum and student awareness campaign. Also, the Education

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Summit on the Children and Youth Violence Prevention initiative, will involve 200 youths to assist in the implementation of strategies to improve school climate and help ensure secure and friendly learning environments. Other community and agency drug prevention initiatives include: ASAP - the Assisting Students and Parents Collaborative (drug prevention) Project; the Rites of Passage Program, the Responsible Fatherhood program, the Collinwood Community Service Agency program on gang reduction. A local television station has agreed to do a public awareness campaign on violence prevention and safety.

Columbus Public Schools

Columbus Public Schools has a variety of violence prevention programs and security procedures in operation. Violence prevention programs include: DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), multicultural education, Safety City developed by the Red Cross, a Careers in Progress seminar developed by the Columbus Police Department for high school students, PEAK (Positive Efforts in Adjustment and Knowledge), an in-school suspension program, I-PASS (Individualized Plan for the Attainment of Success in School), and Tribes/Quest Programs that addresses problems caused by low self-esteem, peer pressure, poor family communication and other personal problems. Also, the district has instituted peer mediation and peer leadership programs. School and community members are actively involved on the Intervention Assistance Team, the Latchkey program that addressees child care issues, and the Franklin County Educational Council that works specifically on developing programs for violence/weapons reduction, crisis intervention management, and conflict resolution.

Dade County Public Schools

Dade County Public Schools has worked with the community, school personnel, parents, and the school board to develop a number of violence prevention initiatives and a comprehensive report entitled SOS - Safe Orderly Schools. Some of the SOS recommendations are: the implementation of SAVE (Students Against Violence in Education), a digital voice messaging phone that allows anyone to report a crime, and endorsement of America's Safe Schools Week, which included in its a campaign a new strict expulsion policy. Also, the district conducts random weapon searches and coordinates with the television station to promote the crime hotline.

Dayton Public Schools

The Dayton Public Schools Board of Education adopted a policy that will enable the district to permanently exclude from school a student who is convicted of weapons-related or drug-related crimes on school grounds or at school functions. Specifically, any student 16 years of age or older who has been convicted in criminal court or found delinquent in juvenile court of one or more specific offenses may be forbidden to attend any public school in the state of Ohio. Prior to the new policy, a student who committed a serious offense could be expelled for up to 160 days. The superintendent will meet with community leaders this month to examine the issue of violence in our society and the needs of students who exhibit violent behavior.

Denver Public Schools

Denver Public Schools has worked with school staff, the local police, the District Attorney, the Mayor, business officials and community members to prevent violence in its schools. DPS provides mentoring, conflict resolution, and staff development within the school. Programs linked to the community have

been implemented such as "Lunch with the Denver Police Officer," the community-wide "Crime Stoppers" program. Also, United Airlines sponsored the distribution of Channel 4's newsletter entitled, "A Family Guide to Preventing Violence."

El Paso Independent School District

El Paso Independent School District promotes school safety and the prevention of violence through its efforts with the Stop the Violence Coalition, and its adoption of new school policies and programs. New policies adopted are: new transfer procedures, new stricter expulsions policy and drug-free and gun-free zones which enhance penalties for drug offenses committed in these zones. Other school safety initiatives include "Crime Stoppers," Parent Patrols, and At-risk Coordinators at every elementary school. Also, alternative schools have been expanded for students who have problems at their home campuses.

Fresno Unified School District

Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) is actively involved in addressing immediate campus safety issues as well as providing programs that will teach values, change attitudes and help both parent and children understand conflict resolution. The Campus Police/Probation School Teams have been developed for the purpose of providing prevention and early intervention services on high school campuses. A joint effort of FUSD and the Fresno Police Department is Operation Stay in School (O.S.I.S.), designed to pick up minors or school age children who are not in school during school hours and to return them to school. The program will start in January. K-6 violence prevention curriculum in schools include: Second Step: A Skill Training Curriculum to Prevent Youth Violence, and Project Yes!: Anti Drug/Gang Violence curriculum. A partnership between Fresno Unified School District and Fresno State University Department of Counseling, School of Education, serves both young students and master's degree students. FUSD students, some of whom could face expulsion, are referred to the Fresno Family Counseling Center staffed by FSU department of education professionals.

Houston Independent School District

Houston Independent School District (HISD) is enacting bold, community-oriented initiatives to create safe instructional environments in each of its 244 schools. HISD's programs to encourage safe schools include the following administrative and instructional initiatives: Zero tolerance policy enforces the rule that any student in possession of a weapon or other dangerous object while on HISD property will be suspended and recommended for expulsion, and in some cases the district will pursue criminal charges, arrest and removal to a juvenile detention facility. HISD has also appointed a Chief of HISD Police Department and expanded jurisdiction of HISD police officers to include territories around the school district. Dads in Action is made up of students' fathers who volunteer their time to patrol hallways and other open areas in the schools as well as serve as role models and mentors for young students. Teen Court, established in conjunction with a local branch of the YMCA and local justices of the peace, addresses misdemeanors by minors with referrals to a court setting where the juvenile offenders are tried and sentenced by their peers to community services. Once an offender's sentence is complete, the case is dismissed from the young person's record. Coalition of Ministers Against Crime formed a partnership with HISD to provide assistance in parent or student counseling and guiding students in drug and violence prevention including on-site volunteer support. WHO (We Help Ourselves), made up of intergroup relations counselors, was formed to work on peer mediation

training, conflict resolution, multicultural education, guidance and counseling, especially for victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Other developments include: school security action plans, alternative elementary and middle schools, character education, and Project DARE.

Indianapolis Public Schools

Indianapolis Public School System established a comprehensive safety program that incorporates conflict resolution, counseling, security, a discipline code brochure, and school-based parental involvement programs to address the need for increased security and safety in the school. The district's drug education department provides small group counseling for whatever problems students may face at home or at school. Metal detector searches and locker searches are conducted randomly as well.

Jefferson County Public Schools

Jefferson County Public Schools has worked with the community and school staff to help create a positive and safe learning environment and to promote healthy lifestyles for students and staff. In cooperation with the Regional Alcohol and Drug Assessment Center the district provides assessment and treatment referral services for students. Safety intervention programs include: RAP(Risk Alleviation Project) providing after-school and evening training in leadership, problem solving, refusal skills and parenting programs; SCAT (School/Community Action Teams) provides safety materials and hosts a leadership camp for over 1000 students; and DARE, a Drug Abuse Resistance Education program. The school has also trained Crisis Intervention Teams for mediation and implemented Crime Stoppers where students can anonymously call and report illegal activity. Various alternative settings have been designed to give students a "second chance" and opportunity to improve their behavior.

The Los Angeles Unified School District

The Los Angeles Unified School District has improved and enhanced its security system and has worked with the police, the community, parents and the District Emergency Task Force on Youth Violence to address ways of promoting safety in schools. Improved security procedures include: the authorization of the District's School Police Department to wear full police uniforms, and allowing the school police to issue citations for violations of various municipal codes and other off-campus enforcement. In addition to stricter penalty for students who bring weapons to school, administrators have been meeting with all secondary students to inform them of safety procedures and the new discipline code that is publicized at each school site. The district has also adopted a "parents patrol," community neighborhood watches and a "weapons tip line" for quick notification on weapons and crimes. School safety initiatives include peer counseling programs in secondary schools, local school community meetings held throughout the city to heighten awareness on school safety, and the establishment of a district-level task force on school violence.

Memphis City School System

Memphis City Schools has implemented a "Weapon Watch" program and the "Officer-in the-School" program. Memphis City Schools, Crime Stoppers and the Memphis Police Department have joined forces to initiate "Weapon Watch," which allows students to anonymously report persons who carry weapons on a school campus.

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

The Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools is currently involved in working with school personnel, the police department and the community to improve security, to implement youth programs, and to create school improvement plans that promote a positive, safe and orderly school climate. All schools must develop a School Improvement Plan that focuses on discipline and safety. Alternative programs have been adopted, as well as a "community service" pilot program designed to help keep children in school or supervised and off the street. 120 community service assignments were located to carry out this project that has three basic parts. First, instead of suspension the student will be allowed to stay in school, but will be required to do several hours of community service after school. Second, an in-house suspension would require the student to do several hours of class work and an assignment within the school premises. Finally, if there is no way to keep the student in school, he will be assigned community service through the Juvenile Court. Other programs include: the Sheriff's department video on citizenship, values and the consequences of making poor behavioral decisions; and a police sponsored sports program for youth.

Milwaukee Public Schools

Milwaukee Public Schools has recently undergone a complete security audit and is working towards a safe and secure school environment. The following safety procedures and initiatives have occurred: staff training and inservice regarding safety/security issues; student training in peer mediation, violence reduction, etc.; enhanced communication with Central Office, social service agencies and Milwaukee Police Department; controlled access to buildings; re-keying of buildings; upgrading security and public address systems in schools; an electronic alarm system, and a districtwide radio network. In addition to developing a Safe School Committee, each school is expected to have an intervention program related to safety and violence reduction.

Minneapolis Public Schools

Minneapolis Public Schools has established a variety of safety initiatives and policies. Some programs implemented are: school-based conflict management such as Lion's Quest/Skills for Growing, Crisis Prevention Intervention, Positive Discipline Model, peer mediation and conflict resolution. The district has adopted crisis (mediation) teams, safe/drug free zones, school/community support teams and police liaison officers. Also, for the first time a radio program is being hosted by each of the district's middle schools on how miscommunication can cause conflicts. The program shares healthy ways to manage anger, while choosing alternatives to violence. Also, the district is planning a student conference on violence prevention, where students will develop violence prevention recommendations for the adults in the community. The school board also adopted a discipline policy that establishes rules and delineates consequences. MPS is working with the Mayor's Office and the Hennepin County Commissioners to plan a collaborative summit on safety and violence prevention.

Newark School District

Newark School District has adopted various procedures/actions for the 1993-94 school year to prevent crime in and around schools. The district adopted the following procedures: a Security Operational Plan that informs administrators what to do in an emergency; the Rapid Response Teams that patrol districts continually during school hours, an improved intrusion alarm system, a camera

monitoring system (to monitor and apprehend graffiti vandals), walk-through metal detectors, annual inservice training for all guards, and a hot-line telepho. number to report concerns and crimes.

New Orleans Public Schools

New Orleans Public Schools conducted a series of public forums in preparation for a districtwide safety and security plan during the summer of 1993. The superintendent, school board, parents and community members, as well as the Superintendent of Police, members of the New Orleans City Council, the Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff, and the School District's security staff participated in the forums. Concerns addressed were safety and security of the physical plan; supervision of students before and after school; student rules, procedures, and identification; weapons, substance abuse, and conflict resolution in the school; rules and procedures for faculty and staff; analysis of data regarding incidents relating to safety and security. Teams have been formed to research other security possibilities such as uniforms, ID cards, two-way radio communication, metal detectors, camcorders, student watch program, security counselors, conflict resolution, random search, posted notices, hall passes, parental involvement, and police services. Recently the district launched a system wide program modeled after the successful New York program "Resolving Conflict Creatively."

Norfolk Public Schools

Norfolk Public Schools is planning to work with educators, parents, law enforcement officials and the community in implementing prevention and intervention strategies to alleviate violence in our nation's schools. In addition to a district-wide 7th grade health course that includes "Teens and Guns" curriculum, NPS is piloting and expanding community and student program for pre-teens, mentoring programs, adopt-a-student, after school activities, teacher training in conflict resolution,early childhood programs, Saturday detention, intramural sports in middle schools, parental support, partnerships, and numerous other activities and school/community programs. One model program, SMART- School Management and Resource Team, keeps an update on incidents and uses the data to implement strict rules and regulations district-wide. Also, the district has also relied on a greater police presence,and is pursuing the following security measures: hiring 39 security officers, increased security officer training and supervision, expanded use of hand-held radios, a random administrative inspection program for use of metal detectors to deter weapons, inspection of lockers, a partnership with the police courts and commonwealth attorney to process and deter unlawful behavior, the establishment of certain acts as mandatory suspension or prosecution, teacher I.D. cards and no trespassing signs at all school entrances, video cameras on school buses and within school areas, private telephone lines in secondary schools for emergencies and a city-wide crime line. The district is currently assessing electronic technology and each school for increased school protection.

Oakland Public Schools

Oakland Public Schools depends on its Health and Safety program to address "life circumstances" of students and families and collaborates with other public and private agencies in addressing the health, mental health and safety needs of students and their families. After a six month planning process inclusive of teachers, school and district administrators, area superintendents, parents, students and community-based organizations, the following programs were selected: social work/case management; conflict mediation; parent/grandparent support; peer education; math and science tutorial; substance abuse and life skills curriculum; and inservice training for district staff on issues of health and safety. Also, Parent Patrols and Teens on Target (TNT) a peer anti-violence program will also be expanded.

The district also established collaboration between TNT, Youth Alive, and Highland General Hospital Trauma Unit by establishing peer "buddy" teams of graduates and current members of Teens on Target to visit teen victims of weapons violence at Highland Hospital in the hope of convincing them not to retaliate and to accept alternatives to street life.

Oklahoma City Public Schools

Oklahoma City Public Schools has brought together a district-wide School Violence Committee which has been appointed to make recommendations for implementing new security procedures and violence prevention programs. Consequently, a violence prevention curriculum has been implemented at the elementary school level, as well as inservice training programs for administrators and staff in gang awareness. The district uses walkthough and handheld metal detectors at all high schools; handheld metal detectors at all middle schools; and full-time security officers are assigned to each high school parking lot. Also, the district maintains "closed campuses" at all schools and picture ID cards are required to be displayed by all high and middle school students.

Omaha Public School District

Omaha Public School District has made student safety a priority in several initiatives undertaken by the schools and in cooperation with community agencies, parents and a Youth Violence Task Force. School districts meet monthly with the Police Chief and leaders from the Omaha Housing Authority, Omaha Boys Club, the Mayor's Office and the Omaha Community Partnership to discuss issues of safety, to plan and develop programs to address community problems. A Student Management Plan that emphasizes social skills, behavior rules, and may include a conflict manager program was developed by school personnel, community members and parents. A conflict manager is a student trained and selected to serve as a conflict manager in the school setting. This plan is now extending to middle schools. Schools are also equipped with "emergency flip charts" that provide directions for action in all emergencies.

The School District of Philadelphia

The School District of Philadelphia provided leadership on increasing public awareness of violence and by working with the community to implement effective and sound discipline policy and violence prevention instruction. A successful forum was held entitled: It Takes a Community To Raise A Child: A Forum on Legislative and Community Action to Safeguard Children and Youth. The forum was comprised of a series of workshops for parents, students, community organizers, violence prevention specialists, teachers and anyone interested in making schools violence free. A task force made clear that the school's role was to eliminate weapons by "whatever is necessary" including random metal detector and locker searches. The district is also continuing its partnership with the police, using parental and community volunteers to patrol hallways, and has strengthened its disciplinary policy. Other initiatives include: Putting Safety First Week, developing a guide for teaching the code of student conduct to grades K-8 and 9-12, facilitating ongoing staff development in violence prevention strategies, continuing development of a ninth grade focus on critical health issues and providing violence prevention mini-grants to schools.

Pittsburgh Public Schools

Pittsburgh Public Schools has worked with the media, local foundations, school personnel, parents and the community regarding the recent phenomenon of gangs, guns, and violence in Pittsburgh. A comprehensive brochure explains policies and information on student dress code, graffiti removal, random weapon searches, Board hearings involving students with drugs and weapons, Drug Free Zones, enforcement of the Drug Free Zone Act, types of gang activity that are prohibited, security policies, school-based safety assessments and plans, police and school partnership programs, and interagency task forces on substance abuse prevention, intervention and enforcement. Specific school programs include: DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) programs, a Crime Watch program, the STAR program, which promotes positive behaviors such as respect and honesty, and the Heartwood program, which uses multicultural readings and discussion of ethical issues and conflict resolution. Additionally, Pittsburgh has been selected for the national Weed and Seed Program, which is designed to eradicate drug use and trafficking. The Jewish Healthcare Foundation is researching the scope of the violence problem and will make recommendations to the district.

Providence School Department

Providence School Department has established a zero tolerance policy for weapons and school violence and created committees and programs to ensure safety for its students. Parents are sent pamphlets that provide them with helpful hints about discussing weapons with their children. If a student is caught with a weapon, the student may be suspended up to 180 days. The district and the Providence Police Department have established a close working relationship, and three teams of police officers are assigned to schools. Programs include: G.R.E.A.T (Gang Resistance Education and Training) for all seventh graders; SOS (Students Off Streets), a program conducted in the middle schools by former gang members who talk to students about the problems related to gang involvement; and Youth Crime Watch which allows students to create their own drug and violence prevention efforts. Security procedures have been improved by: students wearing I.D.s in all high schools and at two middle schools, installing trespassing signs in several languages at school entrances, distribution of security memos and plans to all principals, and providing public relations training to all administrators.

Rochester City School District

Rochester City School District has taken a variety of steps to address the rising incidence of violence in and around schools in the past few years. In addition, to its Civic Values Policy that provides a curriculum framework for the behavior of all students and staff, the District changed policy to require notification of the Rochester Police Department whenever students have weapons in their possession. The District also has established a weapons diversion program, created a Safe Schools Climate Task Force, awarded 22 violence prevention mini-grants, trained many staff members in conflict resolution and peer mediation, initiated plans to implement comprehensive school climate programs and curricula and held numerous meetings with students, parents and school personnel about safety awareness and the consequences of weapons possession. The District is also developing new policies and programs for 1994 that will promote peace through arts curriculum, deter assaults, involve parents more directly in the long-term suspension process, and further engage community agencies and the Rochester Police Department in its violence prevention efforts.

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San Diego Unified School District

San Diego City School Board has set up a "zero-tolerance" policy for weapons and violence in schools. Students bringing weapons to school will be removed from all comprehensive school sites in the district for a minimum of one semester. In addition to a five day suspension and investigation for expulsion or suspended expulsion, students who violate the Penal Code will be charged and arrested and taken to a juvenile detention facility or county jail. In addition to this campaign for a weapon and violence free environment, "Parent Patrols" have been established and a 24 hour hotline for reporting vandalism, intruders and gang activity at school sites.

Seattle Public Schools

Seattle Public Schools has implemented a variety of violence prevention activities and reviewed recommendations from a 1992 Weapons Task Force to improve security measures and initiate a "no tolerance" weapons policy. The district has established alliances with community agencies such as King County Detention Center, City of Seattle Youth and Family Services, and the Seattle Urban League to provide tutoring, behavior modification, counseling, job training and other services to difficult youth. Violence prevention programs include: The Gang Response Team (provides intervention services to youth identified as being involved in a gang), Second Step (teaches refusal skills), conflict resolution and conflict managers (teaches students to resolve problems in school settings), FACES - For All Concerned Educators and Students - (emphasizes diversity training to teachers that "all" children will succeed) and Here's Looking at You 2000 curriculum (teaches about safety and taking care of oneself) and 1994 health curriculum (emphasizes personal, social skills, injury prevention and safety). Other security measures include: the distribution of manuals on bus safety, behavior modification programs for weapons offenses, school awareness on updated Codes of Conduct, and implementation of student intervention teams to help students having difficulty staying in school and exhibiting aggressive behavior.

St. Louis Public Schools

St. Louis Public Schools has launched a successful violence prevention program where schools become recreation sites. Enrollment in the initial registrations ranged from 85 to 150 at each of the six sites. This program is one of the city's first violence prevention efforts developed by the task force setup by the mayor to reduce crime and violence. The "expanded recreation sites" program is open from 5-10 p.m. and has an average daily attendance of 125 individuals. "Positive evening" activities for young people and adults is a cooperative program between the city and the district. At each site recreation staff supervise basketball, volleyball, aerobics, table games, art and crafts and tutoring programs. School staff provide custodial services and helped initially with security.

Tucson Unified School District

Tucson Unified School District has established programs involving a variety of community members, students, school personnel and parents, including "Parents on Patrol," a "Safe-T-Zone" telephone hotline, "School Watch," and a Violence Prevention Team. Additionally, the district has held more than 300 informational meetings and presentations on gangs and preventing school youth violence. TUSD has also created "rights and responsibilities" handbooks and new violence prevention K-8 curriculum; "I Help Bring Peace" and "The Path of the Warrior."

* Compiled by the Council of the Great City Schools

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